

## Message Text

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71-62  
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 EB-07 MC-02 OMB-01 AID-05 IGA-02

COME-00 TRSE-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SS-15

/054 W  
----- 090375

R 182235Z DEC 75  
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9437

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E.O. 11652: NA  
TAGS: MASS, GT  
SUBJ: LANDING CRAFT FOR GUATEMALA

REF: A. STATE 293398 B. GUATEMALA'S A-180 OF 10/22/75

1. IN RESPONSE REFTEL, EMBOFF MET WITH COL. LUIS URRUTIA, PRESIDENT, CHAMPERICO PORT AUTHORITY. DURING COURSE OF CONVERSATION, WHICH DELIBERATELY BEGAN AS REQUEST FOR TOUR DE HORIZON OF PORT PROJECT REPORTED REF. B, EMBOFF ASKED STATUS OF PURCHASE OF LANDING CRAFT. (LOCAL PRESS HAD REPORTED LAST OCTOBER THAT CHAMPERICO HAD ORDERED TWO LANDING CRAFT.) URRUTIA REPLIED THAT TWO LANDING CRAFT HAD BEEN BOUGHT IN US AND WERE EXPECTED TO BE SHIPPED FROM VIRGINIA EARLY NEXT YEAR. THEY WOULD BE USED, HE SAID, FOR CARGO HANDLING DURING EMERGENCIES SUCH AS HAD OCCURRED EARLY THIS YEAR WHEN THE AREA AROUND PIER SILTED UP. CRAFT WOULD BE ABLE TO MOVE CARGO DIRECTLY FROM BEACH TO SHIPS ANCHORED OFFSHORE.

2. AS TO HOW MANY ARE NEEDED, URRUTIA ANSWERED TWO. HE ADDED THAT BECAUSE THESE COULD BE CONSIDERED MILITARY ITEMS, HE HAD WRITTEN TO GUATEMALAN AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON TO ARRANGE FOR CLEARANCE OF PURCHASE. CHAMPERICO WOULD BE PAYING \$40,000 EACH FOR THEM OUT OF ITS OWN FUNDS. HE

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SAID SHIPMENT WOULD BE EITHER THROUGH PANAMA CANAL TO

CHAMPERICO OR TO SANTO TOMAS FROM WHERE THEY WOULD BE TRUCKED OVERLAND. (LATTER WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE.)

3. VICE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS, AT LATER MEETING WITH EMBOFF IN WHICH MATTER OF LANDING CRAFT WAS RAISED IN PASSING, CORRABORATED URRUTIA'S STATEMENT THAT CHAMPERICO WAS PLANNING TO ACQUIRE LANDING CRAFT. (DID NOT SPECIFY NUMBER.)

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS NO REASON TO DOUBT URRUTIA'S STATEMENT REGARDING DESTINATION OF TWO LANDING CRAFT, WHICH MAKE SENSE IN VIEW OF PAST PROBLEMS OF PORT. WE DO NOT KNOW WHY FIGURE OF SIX CRAFT WAS USED BY GUATEMALAN EMBASSY AND HAVE HEARD OF NO OTHER PALNS HERE TO BUY THIS TYPE CRAFT. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT EXPORT OF TWO LCM-6'S BE APPROVED PROMPTLY. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH ADVISE GUATEMALAN EMBASSY FORMALLY OR INFORMALLY THAT US UNDERSTANDS EXPORT LICENSE FOR TWO CRAFT MEETS NEEDS TO WHICH THEIR SEPTEMBER NOTE REFERRED. SHOULD THE EMBASSY PRESS FOR ADDITIONAL CRAFT, MORE INFORMATION ON DESTINATION AND USE WILL BE REQUIRED.

5. ONCE LCM'S ARE IN GUATEMALAN POSSESSION, THERE IS OF COURSE NO WAY TO PREVENT THEIR BEING SHIFTED FROM CHAMPERICO TO ATLANTIC COAST(UNLESS WE WERE TO REFUSE THEM PASSAGE THROUGH CANAL). HOWEVER, THE SAME IS TRUE OF COUNTLESS OTHER BOATS, TRUCKS, PLANES, AND WEAPONS NOW IN HANDS OF CIVILIAN AGENCIES AND PRIVATE CITIZENS WHICH COULD BE RE-QUISITIONED BY GOG IN TIME OF TOTAL MOBILIZATION. UNLESS WE ARE TO STOP COMMERCIAL EXPORTS TO GUATEMALA OF ANYTHING THAT MIGHT HAVE MILITARY USE, WE SEE NO WAY TO RULE OUT POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DIVERSION. WE DO NOT, HOWEVER, VIEW THAT POSSIBILITY AS LIKELY IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**To:** STATE  
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